

ALIMONY AMENDMENTS

2011 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

LONG TITLE**General Description:**

This bill creates a new section regarding alimony.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- ▶ requires that a court ordering alimony in excess of \$1,000 per month for longer than 60 months require a plan for self-sufficiency from the recipient;
- ▶ provides for a systematic decrease in alimony after a specific period of time;
- ▶ lists factors the court is to take into consideration when ordering alimony with a systematic decrease provision;
- ▶ eliminates the cohabitation requirement for the termination of alimony; and
- ▶ makes technical corrections.

Monies Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

30-2-5, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2008, Chapter 3

30-3-5, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2010, Chapter 285

ENACTS:

30-3-5.3, Utah Code Annotated 1953

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **30-2-5** is amended to read:

30-2-5. Separate debts.

(1) Neither spouse is personally liable for the separate debts, obligations, or liabilities of the other:

(a) contracted or incurred before marriage;

(b) contracted or incurred during marriage, except family expenses as provided in Section 30-2-9;

(c) contracted or incurred after divorce or an order for separate maintenance under this title, except the spouse is personally liable for that portion of the expenses incurred on behalf of a minor child for reasonable and necessary medical and dental expenses, and other similar necessities as provided in a court order under Section 30-3-5, 30-4-3, or 78B-12-212, or an administrative order under Section 62A-11-326; or

(d) ordered by the court to be paid by the other spouse under Section 30-3-5, 30-3-5.3, or 30-4-3 and not in conflict with Section 15-4-6.5 or 15-4-6.7.

(2) The wages, earnings, property, rents, or other income of one spouse may not be reached by a creditor of the other spouse to satisfy a debt, obligation, or liability of the other spouse, as described under Subsection (1).

Section 2. Section **30-3-5** is amended to read:

30-3-5. Disposition of property -- Maintenance and health care of parties and children -- Division of debts -- Court to have continuing jurisdiction -- Custody and parent-time -- Nonmeritorious petition for modification.

(1) When a decree of divorce is rendered, the court may include in it equitable orders relating to the children, property, debts or obligations, and parties. The court shall include the following in every decree of divorce:

(a) an order assigning responsibility for the payment of reasonable and necessary medical and dental expenses of the dependent children including responsibility for health insurance out-of-pocket expenses such as co-payments, co-insurance, and deductibles;

(b) (i) if coverage is or becomes available at a reasonable cost, an order requiring the purchase and maintenance of appropriate health, hospital, and dental care insurance for the dependent children; and

(ii) a designation of which health, hospital, or dental insurance plan is primary and which health, hospital, or dental insurance plan is secondary in accordance with the provisions of Section 30-3-5.4 which will take effect if at any time a dependent child is covered by both parents' health, hospital, or dental insurance plans;

(c) pursuant to Section 15-4-6.5:

64 (i) an order specifying which party is responsible for the payment of joint debts,
65 obligations, or liabilities of the parties contracted or incurred during marriage;

66 (ii) an order requiring the parties to notify respective creditors or obligees, regarding
67 the court's division of debts, obligations, or liabilities and regarding the parties' separate,
68 current addresses; and

69 (iii) provisions for the enforcement of these orders; and

70 (d) provisions for income withholding in accordance with Title 62A, Chapter 11,
71 Recovery Services.

72 (2) The court may include, in an order determining child support, an order assigning
73 financial responsibility for all or a portion of child care expenses incurred on behalf of the
74 dependent children, necessitated by the employment or training of the custodial parent. If the
75 court determines that the circumstances are appropriate and that the dependent children would
76 be adequately cared for, it may include an order allowing the noncustodial parent to provide
77 child care for the dependent children, necessitated by the employment or training of the
78 custodial parent.

79 (3) The court has continuing jurisdiction to make subsequent changes or new orders for
80 the custody of the children and their support, maintenance, health, and dental care, and for
81 distribution of the property and obligations for debts as is reasonable and necessary.

82 (4) Child support, custody, visitation, and other matters related to children born to the
83 mother and father after entry of the decree of divorce may be added to the decree by
84 modification.

85 (5) (a) In determining parent-time rights of parents and visitation rights of grandparents
86 and other members of the immediate family, the court shall consider the best interest of the
87 child.

88 (b) Upon a specific finding by the court of the need for peace officer enforcement, the
89 court may include in an order establishing a parent-time or visitation schedule a provision,
90 among other things, authorizing any peace officer to enforce a court-ordered parent-time or
91 visitation schedule entered under this chapter.

92 (6) If a petition for modification of child custody or parent-time provisions of a court
93 order is made and denied, the court shall order the petitioner to pay the reasonable attorneys'
94 fees expended by the prevailing party in that action, if the court determines that the petition

was without merit and not asserted or defended against in good faith.

(7) If a petition alleges noncompliance with a parent-time order by a parent, or a visitation order by a grandparent or other member of the immediate family where a visitation or parent-time right has been previously granted by the court, the court may award to the prevailing party costs, including actual attorney fees and court costs incurred by the prevailing party because of the other party's failure to provide or exercise court-ordered visitation or parent-time.

~~[(8)(a) The court shall consider at least the following factors in determining alimony:]~~

~~[(i) the financial condition and needs of the recipient spouse;]~~

~~[(ii) the recipient's earning capacity or ability to produce income;]~~

~~[(iii) the ability of the payor spouse to provide support;]~~

~~[(iv) the length of the marriage;]~~

~~[(v) whether the recipient spouse has custody of minor children requiring support;]~~

~~[(vi) whether the recipient spouse worked in a business owned or operated by the payor spouse; and]~~

~~[(vii) whether the recipient spouse directly contributed to any increase in the payor spouse's skill by paying for education received by the payor spouse or allowing the payor spouse to attend school during the marriage.]~~

~~[(b) The court may consider the fault of the parties in determining alimony.]~~

~~[(c) As a general rule, the court should look to the standard of living, existing at the time of separation, in determining alimony in accordance with Subsection (8)(a). However, the court shall consider all relevant facts and equitable principles and may, in its discretion, base alimony on the standard of living that existed at the time of trial. In marriages of short duration, when no children have been conceived or born during the marriage, the court may consider the standard of living that existed at the time of the marriage.]~~

~~[(d) The court may, under appropriate circumstances, attempt to equalize the parties' respective standards of living.]~~

~~[(e) When a marriage of long duration dissolves on the threshold of a major change in the income of one of the spouses due to the collective efforts of both, that change shall be considered in dividing the marital property and in determining the amount of alimony. If one spouse's earning capacity has been greatly enhanced through the efforts of both spouses during~~

the marriage, the court may make a compensating adjustment in dividing the marital property and awarding alimony.]

~~[(f) In determining alimony when a marriage of short duration dissolves, and no children have been conceived or born during the marriage, the court may consider restoring each party to the condition which existed at the time of the marriage.]~~

~~[(g) (i) The court has continuing jurisdiction to make substantive changes and new orders regarding alimony based on a substantial material change in circumstances not foreseeable at the time of the divorce.]~~

~~[(ii) The court may not modify alimony or issue a new order for alimony to address needs of the recipient that did not exist at the time the decree was entered, unless the court finds extenuating circumstances that justify that action.]~~

~~[(iii) In determining alimony, the income of any subsequent spouse of the payor may not be considered, except as provided in this Subsection (8).]~~

~~[(A) The court may consider the subsequent spouse's financial ability to share living expenses.]~~

~~[(B) The court may consider the income of a subsequent spouse if the court finds that the payor's improper conduct justifies that consideration.]~~

~~[(h) Alimony may not be ordered for a duration longer than the number of years that the marriage existed unless, at any time prior to termination of alimony, the court finds extenuating circumstances that justify the payment of alimony for a longer period of time.]~~

~~[(9) Unless a decree of divorce specifically provides otherwise, any order of the court that a party pay alimony to a former spouse automatically terminates upon the remarriage or death of that former spouse. However, if the remarriage is annulled and found to be void ab initio, payment of alimony shall resume if the party paying alimony is made a party to the action of annulment and his rights are determined.]~~

~~[(10) Any order of the court that a party pay alimony to a former spouse terminates upon establishment by the party paying alimony that the former spouse is cohabitating with another person.]~~

Section 3. Section **30-3-5.3** is enacted to read:

30-3-5.3. Alimony.

(1) In any final decree of divorce, the court may order a party to pay alimony to the

157 other party, taking into consideration the following factors:

158 (a) the financial condition and needs of the recipient party;

159 (b) the recipient's earning capacity or ability to produce income;

160 (c) the ability of the payor party to provide support;

161 (d) the length of the marriage;

162 (e) whether the recipient has custody of minor children requiring support;

163 (f) whether the recipient worked in a business owned or operated by the payor; and

164 (g) whether the recipient directly contributed to any increase in the payor's skill by
165 paying for education received by the payor or allowing the payor to attend school during the
166 marriage.

167 (2) The court may consider the fault of the parties in determining alimony.

168 (3) As a general rule, the court should look to the standard of living existing at the time
169 of separation in determining alimony.

170 (a) The court shall consider all relevant facts and equitable principles and may, in its
171 discretion, base alimony on the standard of living that existed at the time of trial.

172 (b) In marriages of short duration, when no children have been conceived or born
173 during the marriage, the court may consider the standard of living that existed at the time of the
174 marriage.

175 (c) The court may, under appropriate circumstances, attempt to equalize the parties'
176 respective standards of living.

177 (4) When a marriage of long duration dissolves on the threshold of a major change in
178 the income of one of the spouses due to the collective efforts of both, that change shall be
179 considered in dividing the marital property and in determining the amount of alimony. If one
180 party's earning capacity has been greatly enhanced through the efforts of both parties during the
181 marriage, the court may make a compensating adjustment in dividing the marital property and
182 awarding alimony.

183 (5) (a) The court has continuing jurisdiction to make substantive changes and new
184 orders regarding alimony based on a substantial material change in circumstances not
185 foreseeable at the time of the divorce.

186 (b) The court may not modify alimony or issue a new order for alimony to address
187 needs of the recipient that did not exist at the time the decree was entered, unless the court

finds extenuating circumstances that justify that action.

(c) In determining alimony, the income of any subsequent spouse of the payor may not be considered, except as provided in this Subsection (5)(c).

(i) The court may consider the subsequent spouse's financial ability to share living expenses.

(ii) The court may consider the income of a subsequent spouse if the court finds that the payor's improper conduct justifies that consideration.

(6) Alimony may not be ordered for a duration longer than the number of years that the marriage existed unless, at any time prior to termination of alimony, the court finds extenuating circumstances that justify the payment of alimony for a longer period of time.

(7) If a party requests, or the court orders, alimony in an amount in excess of \$1,000 per month for more than 60 months, the court shall require the requesting or recipient party to present to the court a plan detailing a course of action the recipient will undertake in order to become self-sufficient. The court may waive this requirement if it makes specific findings that the recipient is not able to become self-sufficient.

(8) If the court determines that the recipient party has the ability to become self-sufficient, it may order that the amount of alimony be decreased by a certain amount over a specified time period to allow the recipient time to pursue training or education necessary to become self-sufficient. The court shall take a number of factors into consideration when determining how long it may take a recipient to become self-sufficient. The factors shall include:

(a) the age of the recipient;

(b) the educational background of the recipient;

(c) whether there are minor children still in the recipient's household; and

(d) any difficulty the recipient might face in obtaining training or education necessary to become self-sufficient;

(9) Unless a decree of divorce specifically provides otherwise, any order of the court that a party pay alimony to the other party automatically terminates upon the remarriage of the recipient or the death of either party. If the remarriage is annulled or found to be void ab initio, payment of alimony shall resume if the payor is made a party to the action of annulment and the payor's rights are determined.

